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ABSTRACT

Produced by the Montana Council for Indian Education as part of its Indian Culture Series, the five short articles in the book explain how the Plains Indians got horses in legend and in fact. The stories describe the behavior codes, rules, cultural and social significance, and eventual cessation of horse raids, and the ceremony and tradition surrounding Indian horse races. The book also notes what the Indians looked for in a good horse, and how they used their animals. The book has a reading and interest level rating of medium difficulty. (SB)

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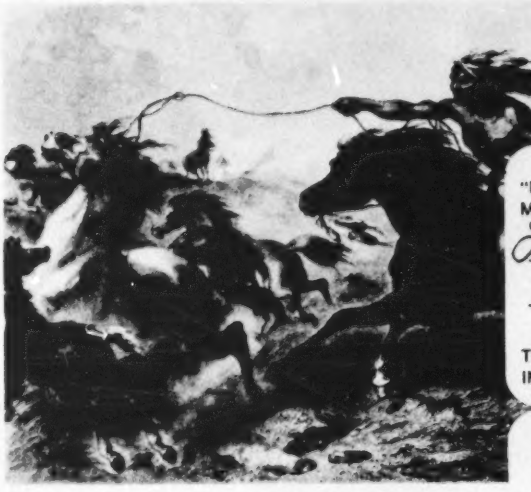

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THE HORSE AND THE

PLAINS INDIAN

by
RAYMOND SCHUESSLER

Edited by
Tom Weist
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WHEN THE INDIAN GOT THE HORSE
by Raymond Schuessler

If anything changed the Indian's way of life and made him a powerful resistance to white man's invasion, it was the use of the horse. The Indian, once stalking his game on foot, became a clever and often remarkable horseman. No longer was he the humble hunter. He had become a warrior with wings. And how he did ride!

The mounted Indian was called by many soldiers who met him in war, "the greatest horseman in the world." Many historians say that the Indian belonged with the top two or three best horsemen in the world.

Indian boys were taught to ride at the age of six or seven, and they lived with and on their mounts for the rest of their lives. The Indian not only rode the horse,

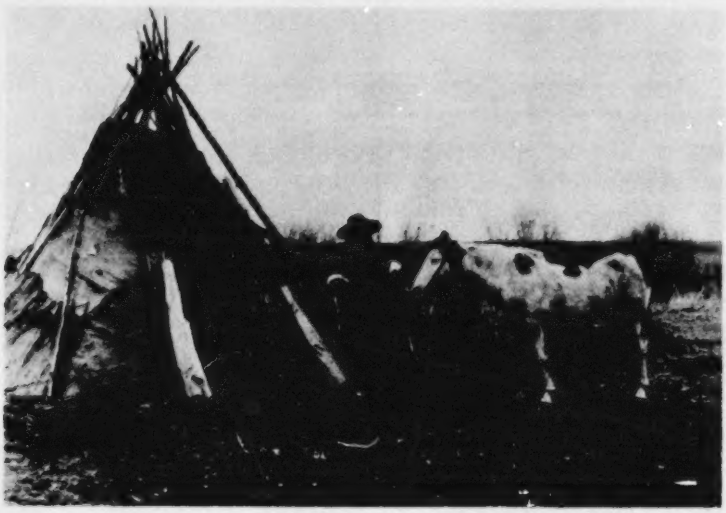

Photo courtesy Smithsonian Office of Anthropology
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he became part of the beast. More than once an Indian jumped his horse over a ten-foot wide chasm to avoid being captured.

On the horse, the Indian with his bow and arrows became superior to the Spanish and their old muskets. In battle the Indian could lay on the side of the animal with only an arm and leg showing, and shoot from beneath the neck of the horse. Of course, this wasn't his usual way of fighting. Running broadside, his horse became too easy a target.

During the war of 1865 on Powder River, after General Conner's drawn battle with a large force of Arapaho and Cheyenne, an Arapaho rode up and down in front of the command within a few hundred yards, and while his horse was galloping, swung himself down under the horse's neck, came up on the other side and resumed his seat, repeating the feat many times.

The rugged Indian pony, foraging on the plains, could easily outrun the grain fed horse of the white man.

One army officer wrote in 1867: "The Indian pony, without stopping, can cover a distance of from 60 to 80 miles between sunrise to sunset, while most of our horses are tired out at the end of 30 to 40 miles..... which means they always get away from us."

Washington Irving was convinced that the possession of the horse not only changed the way of life of many tribes, but their health and stature as well. As he put it, "The Indians, continually on horseback, scouring the Plains, gaining their food by hardy exercises and living chiefly on flesh, are generally tall, sinewy but well formed."

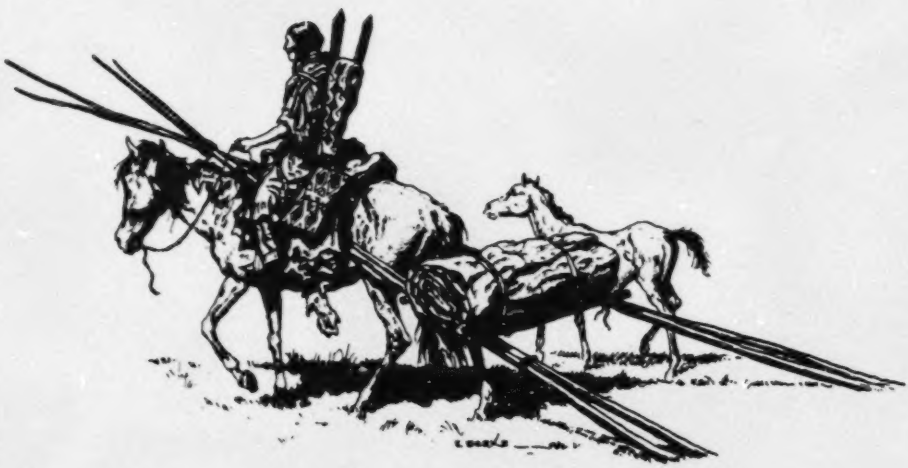
Most tribes originally obtained horses through trade with other friendly tribes. Once they had gotten the horse, their herds were increased either by capturing wild horses that roamed the plains or by

Photo by F. O. C. Darley, engraved by Rice 1872, courtesy Library of Congress

raiding enemy horse herds. In certain instances, the availability of horses in an area was influential in drawing migrating tribes to the area.

Those tribes without horses soon organized expeditions to other tribes to obtain this beast which meant the difference now between life and death. The Indians helped one another in many cases, trading horses to the have-not tribes.

The dog before this had been the Indian's only domestic animal, his companion in the hunt, and his assistant as a burden bearer. Before they had horses the Indians were footmen, making short journeys and carrying their things mostly on their backs, although the dogs also carried burdens and pulled loads. The hunting Indian owned a very small amount of property, since the quantity that he could carry was small.



Now all this was changed. The Indians soon realized that having an animal like the horse would increase their freedom of movement and enable them to increase their property, since one horse could carry the load of several men. Besides this, it insured a food supply and made the moving of camp easy and swift and long journeys possible. The horse, also, became a medium of exchange and wealth.

With the horse came new intertribal relations; war parties were sent forth often to capture more horses. This at once became a recognized industry, followed by the bravest and strongest young men. Many of the tribes, before they got horses, got guns which gave them new boldness; horse and gun soon changed foot wanderers to daring and dangerous raiders.

On the plains, horses were sometimes used as food, but not ordinarily when other meat could be obtained. Sometimes war parties, on horse raiding expeditions, killed and ate horses. When this was done the leader of the party was always careful to warn his men to wash themselves thoroughly with sand or mud and water before they went near the enemy's camp. Horses greatly dread the smell of horse flesh or horse fat and will not allow the approach of anyone smelling of it.

Though all tribes engaged in horse stealing, they regarded the horse raid as an act of aggression. Members of a horse raiding party were always young braves hoping to advance socially by owning a few horses. As one observer wrote in 1829: "An Indian, if well mounted, feels an aristocratic pride which has its parallel nowhere but in the bosom of a ragged Circassian prince...a band of braves may go out on foot, but they are rarely observed to return pedestrians."

Horses became a symbol of wealth in Indian tribes, and some warriors, who owned as many as 50 horses, were considered unusually well off. The Blackfeet, Many Horses, owned from 500 to 1,000 horses at one time, all

of which he could recognize. The Northern Cheyenne, Black White Man, also owned more than 1,000 horses.

It was quite impossible to fix the dates at which any tribes got their horses, and since many of the Plains tribes wandered in small bodies which seldom met, it is likely that some bands got the horse a long time before other bands from the same tribe. The Cheyenne legends tell that they got their first horses from the Arapaho, from the Kiowa and from the Shoshoni, and all these statements may be true for different branches of the tribe. They first obtained horses sometime after 1750. The Pawnee are known to have had horses and to have used them in hunting early in the 18th century. The Shoshoni were using horses around 1700, and the Flathead obtained them about 1730.

If we had to pin down some kind of date, we would have to say that the Indians adopted the horse during the period from 1650 to 1760. Spanish records dated 1659, report Apache raids carried off 300 head of livestock including horses. We also know for a fact that in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the Pueblos and Apaches were trading horses to the Pawnee in 1682.

Most Indians became keen and careful horse traders. They were well aware of the ability and history of every animal offered by their fellow tribesmen. Some Indians were able to select a good buffalo runner before it was three years old. A horse with a long thin tailbone and fine, small veins was thought to be a fast and valuable one. The horse with a broad-boned tail and large, open veins was considered of little value as a worthy runner.

How much did a good horse cost? The Blackfeet, Lazy Boy, recalled that his father got two good horses in exchange for 16 head and tail buffalo robes. Some historians regarded the value of eight buffalo robes for one horse a fairly common exchange in the late 1860's and 1870's. Chewing Black Bones claimed a good horse was exchanged for a good bow, 20 arrows and quiver. A

gun was often exchanged even for a good buffalo horse.

The horse as the Indian developed him, without fancy oats and with constant war work, grew into a distinct breed. It is true that the Indian pony probably could be traced back to the Barb horses introduced into Spain by the invasion of the Moors in the eighth century, but it developed a personality of its own under the Indian. It was no beautiful animal, but tough and rugged like the Indian, with lots of endurance and faster than army horses. An adult male pony averaged 14 hands high and 700 pounds in weight. He had a large head, good eyes, large round barrel, heavy shoulders and hips, strong limbs and small feet.

At first the Indian had no saddle. He simply rode on a pelt cinched around the horse. Their bridles were a thing looped around the lower jaw. Some tribes kept a neck rope dragging so if they fell they could catch the dragging rope and keep their horses.

In some tribes, horses were broken by boys 12 to 13 years old. The easiest way to break him was in a river. First the horse was taken in water up to his shoulders. The boy quickly mounted the brone's back. The brone would try to jump and buck, but when his head went under a few times he quieted down. After he tired, the rider rode him out. Sometimes they were taken into swampy land for the same treatment. Of course, many tribes broke their horses by letting them buck and riding them out.

In some tribes, the Indian did something no white man of the time ever tried--he "broke" his horse with kindness. Instead of mounting and riding him, he made friends with him, slowly and gently through many days and weeks. And when he could come up to the horse without frightening him, he slowly let the horse become familiar with the riding equipment, ever so slowly through coaxing and petting. When it finally came time to mount

him, the Indian would gently put his elbow on the horse's back and just put a little pressure at a time, for days at a time. It might take weeks before he came to sit on the horse, but by that time the horse did not object to a rider.

Besides the readiness with which the Indian accepted his new animal, we must be no less amazed at the remarkable liking of the horse for the Indian. The Indian of early America loved his horse more than any of his other possessions. He could not feed him fancy grains nor rub fine oils into his skin, but he knew that the horse was happiest living the wild, untamed life with the rugged plains warrior whom he also loved.

THE COMING OF THE HORSE
Two Indian Legends

by Tom Weist

Most of the Indian Tribes had legends that told of the origin of the horse. Some of these, such as the Blackfeet, tell of the creation of the horse which, like man and the world itself, came from the water. Others tell how one tribe acquired the horse from another. For example, both the Cheyenne and Arapahoe have legends which tell how a group of Cheyennes, far from home, were given horses, which were previously unknown to them, by the Arapahoes.

The two stories that follow are typical. The first is the Blackfeet legend of the creation of the horse. The second is one of several told by the Crow Indians.

THE BLACKFEET LEGEND

Long ago the Piegans camped on a large flatland. That night the two daughters of the chief lay looking at the stars. The younger daughter watched a very bright star and, as she watched, a strange feeling came over her. After a time she said to herself, "If that star were a young man, I would marry him," and she continued to gaze at the star that shone so brightly.

The next day the chief gave orders to move the camp. The dogs were hitched to their travois which carried all the people's belongings. Then the entire camp set out on their journey.

Before long the younger daughter of the chief was forced to stop when a rawhide strap on her travois broke. The rest of the people moved on until soon they were out

of sight. Finally the girl fixed the strap and was about to start once more when, suddenly, she looked up and saw a very handsome young man standing before her. She became very frightened and knelt down before him.

"Don't be afraid," he told her. "I'm the star you wished to marry. Now close your eyes and I will take you with me to the Star World where I live."

The young girl closed her eyes and when she opened them, she was in her husband's lodge far above the other stars. His father was the Great Chief of the Sky World.

Here there were many lodges. The people were very kind to her and she soon found that she was quite happy living in the Sky World.

Many roots grew in the fields, roots that the girl liked to eat; however, she was told that she must not eat one particular root.

"You may dig and eat any root except this one," her Star Husband told her.

For a long time she did just as her husband had told her but then one day while she was digging roots, she became curious and taking her sharpened stick began to dig around the forbidden root. The root was quite long and she dug deeper and deeper until she had made a large hole in the ground of the Sky World. When she looked down into the hole she could see far below, the Earth World. She saw her father and sister and her friends as they moved about in her village. As she watched, she became sad and was so filled with homesickness that she began to cry. She was still crying when her husband and his father found her. Both were sad for they knew that soon she would leave them.

The next morning they made a long rope of buffalo hides and lowered her down through the hole in the Sky World until she had once more reached the Earth World.

All her people were happy to see her; they rejoiced that the long-lost daughter of their chief had returned to them. Not long after her return, she gave birth to a son.

Time passed until some five years later a terrible plague swept through the tribe. Many people died, including the young mother. Her son was left in the care of an uncle, who was now the chief. The people were now very poor and went hungry. There was no one to make moccasins for them or dress the buffalo hides. They had no dogs to pull their travois.

Far above in the Sky World, the child's father and his grandmother and grandfather, the Great Chief, saw the suffering of the people. Their hearts were sad and they thought for some time about what they could do to help the people. Finally, the Great Chief and his wife went down to the Earth World, and finding the boy alone, told him why they had come. The little boy and his grandparents cried together.

Then the Great Chief sat down on the grass. "Now, my son," he said. "Bring me some wet clay."

When the little boy returned with the clay, the Great Chief took it in his hands and molded it. As he was doing this, he spoke strange words, making strong medicine. When he finished, he put the thing he had made from the clay on the grass. The little boy looked at it and suddenly, it began to grow larger and larger. Then the Great Chief spoke to it and it began to move.

Now the Great Chief called a council of all the trees of the forest, the birds of the air, and the beasts that roamed the plains. All came since the Great Chief ruled over them.

When they had gathered for the great council, the Great Chief said, "I have made a horse for my grandson, an animal for him to ride, an animal that will carry his burdens. Now each of you must give of your wisdom so that this horse may be perfect."

Pine Tree answered, "Great Chief, your work is good, but the horse has no tail. It must have a tail to be perfect. From what I have, I shall gladly give it."

And Pine Tree gave the horse a tail. Seeing this, the Great Chief said, "It is good."

Fir Tree said, "Great Chief, your work is good, but the horse has no mane. It needs a mane too, to be perfect. From what I have, I gladly give it."

And Fir Tree gave the horse a mane. "It is good," said the Great Chief.

Then Turtle said, "Great Chief, your work is good, but the horse has no hoofs. From what I have, I will give them."

And Turtle gave hoofs to the horse. "That, too, is good," said the Great Chief.

Next Elk said, "Great Chief, your work is good, but the horse is too small. I am too large. From what I have, I will give what it needs."

So Elk made the horse larger. And again the Great Chief said, "That is good."

Then Cottonwood said, "Great Chief, your work is good, but the horse has no saddle. From what I have, I will give it a saddle."

And Cottonwood gave the horse a saddle. "It is good," said the Great Chief once more.

Now Buffalo said, "Great Chief, your work is good, but the saddle Cottonwood has given is bare. From what I have, I will give a cover for the saddle. Also there is no hair rope with which to lead the horse. I give that as well."

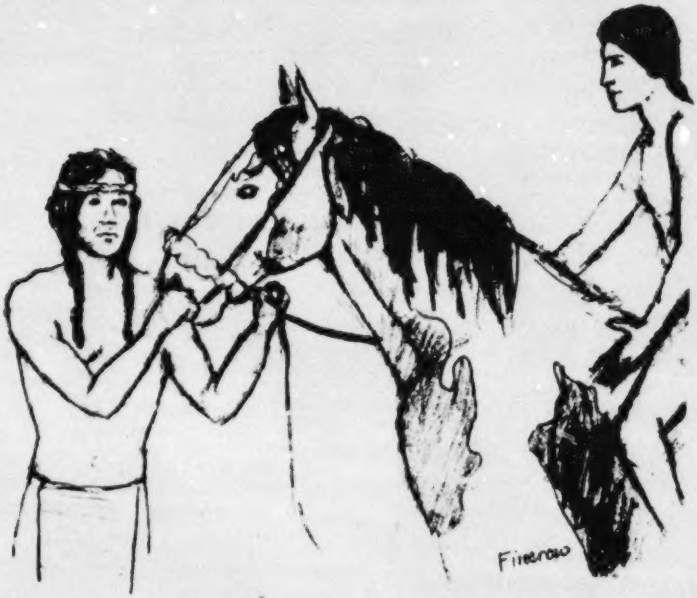
"That is good, very good," said the Great Chief.

Then Snake, who lay coiled, raised his head. "Great Chief, your work is good, but the saddle has no straps. From what I have, I will give a strap."

"That, too, is good," said the Great Chief.

Finally Wolf said, "Great Chief, your work is good, but the saddle needs a soft cover. I will give it." So Wolf gave a fur robe.

"That is good," said the Great Chief. "The horse is now complete. Take it, my son. The council is ended."



The boy's grandmother turned to him and gave him a sack of pemmican. "My son," she said, "watch over this. It is a magic sack of pemmican. No matter how much is eaten, it will never become empty."

After giving the horse and the pemmican to their grandson, the Great Chief and his wife returned to the Sky World. Then the boy mounted his mare and rode to his people. The animal seemed very strange to them.

After a time the mare had a colt, and then another. Soon there were enough horses to carry his uncle's lodge poles and lodge skins when the camp was moved. Now the other people began to grow jealous.

The young man told his uncle, the chief, "Take the tribe to the great lake tomorrow, and I will make strong medicine and perform a miracle."

The next morning the chief did as his nephew wished. The people dug holes near the edge of the lake, then hid in them and waited. Before long the young man came

down out of the hills on his mare with her many colts following behind.

The young man called to his uncle. "I am going to leave you," he said. "You will never see me again. Here is the magic sack of pemmican. I have made strong medicine, and before I go I will make every fish in the lake turn into a horse so that there will be many horses for your people. Tell them to watch. Tell them that when the horses come from the lake they should catch as many of them as they can.

"But you, uncle, are not to catch any of the horses. Wait until you see my old mare come from the water. You must catch her. If you and your people do as I have told you, all will be well."

Now the young man mounted his mare and rode into the lake until he could no longer be seen. Soon the surface of the lake began to foam. The people were frightened when they saw this and would have run away had their chief not ordered them back to their posts. Now horses' heads suddenly began to appear above the water, and the animals came swimming toward the shore. Hundreds of horses came from the water onto the bank. The people sprang up and captured many of them; the others escaped and formed the bands of wild horses that roam the plains. The chief did just as his nephew had told him and did not catch any of the horses, but waited until the old mare came from the lake. She was the last horse.

The people laughed as he caught her for she was very old and weak. But the uncle paid no attention to them. That night he tied the mare up near his lodge. As the moon came up over the distant hills, the old mare neighed three times, and from the thick brush nearby many colts came running until the chief's lodge was surrounded by a large herd of horses. His people never again laughed at him for he was now richer than any of them.

That is how the Piegans were given horses by the Great Chief.

THE CROW LEGEND

One of the legends told by the old people among the Crows tells how horses were given to them by the "Little People."

According to another legend told the Crows, the first white men and the first horses they saw came out of the big water near where they once lived. The only knowledge the Crows had of the horse came from this legend.

Since they did not have horses, women and dogs carried their belongings whenever they moved camp. The women walked with heavy burdens on their backs. Dogs carried the lodges which were large and heavy so that each lodge had to be divided and was carried by two dogs.

Not long after the Crows reached the Yellowstone country, they were visited by a party of Nez Percés who offered to trade horses to them.

"Horses are larger than dogs," the Nez Percés told them. "They are strong enough to carry heavy burdens."

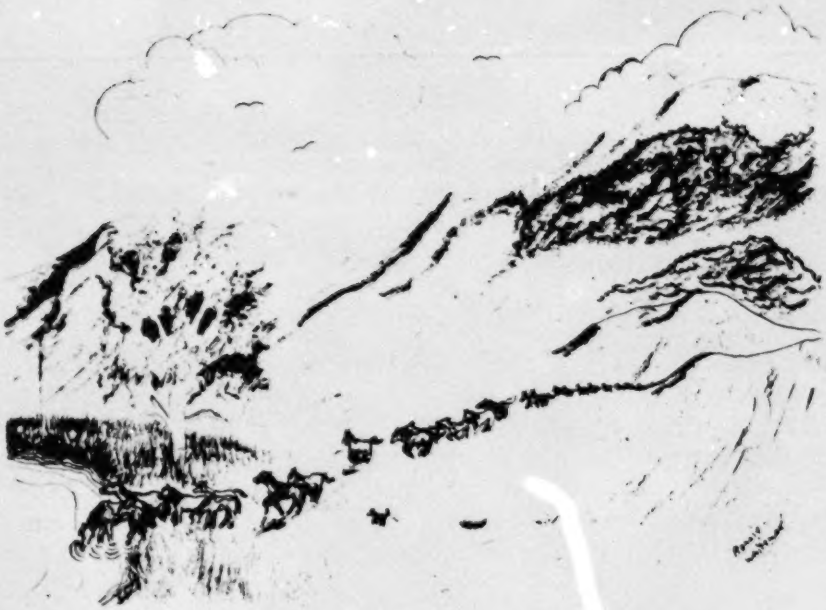
So a party of Crows visited the Nez Percé camp and there saw for the first time the large animals seen by their ancestors. The Crows traded for a few horses and then set out on their journey back to their own camp.

While they were traveling, one man had a strange thing happen to him. As he stood near the stream, a man suddenly rose up out of the water and stood before him; he was dressed in black from head to foot.

"What are you doing in this place?" the strange man asked.

"I have come after horses and am on my way home," the man replied.

Then the strange man gave a loud call and all at once



a hundred horses of all colors galloped from a nearby woods; they were fine looking animals.

"Take your choice," said the man in black.

The man chose a handsome coal-black horse.

"Now mount him," the stranger told him. "He is strong and can carry heavy burdens. Hurry home, but don't look back until you have reached your camp; otherwise you will have bad luck."

The man mounted the horse and galloped off, enjoying the feel of riding the horse and knowing that he was traveling faster than any Crow had ever done before. He seemed to be followed by a herd of horses like the one he was riding. He wondered whether the man in black had given him other horses as well. And yet he could not see them; he dared not look back though he could hear the pounding of hoofs behind him.

When night came, he dismounted, then lay down to sleep, being careful to lie on his stomach with his head

pointing toward his camp. He wanted to make sure that if he awakened suddenly he wouldn't look behind him.

He traveled two more days before reaching his camp and the pounding of horses' hoofs followed him all the way.

Reaching the camp he found that he had brought with him the hundred horses he had seen near the stream. The people were amazed when they saw these horses. Not only would the horses take the place of dogs as beasts of burden, but they would carry on their backs Crow hunters and warriors from that time on. After that, the people got other horses by trading until they had many horses and were never again without them. And because the strange man in black had told them the horses were strong and powerful, they used them to carry their burdens.

THE INDIAN HORSE RAID
by Raymond Schuessler

Horse raiding among the western Indians was a skilled art and a mark of high honor to anyone who was good at it. The act was not a matter of morality but more of a skillful game. An expert horse raider in any Indian tribe was regarded in the same light as Mickey Mantle might be in our modern society, but only among his own tribe, of course.

The ideal horse raid was aimed at the capture of enemy horses, without the knowledge of their owners and without bloodshed. Still a horse raid could mean war. Indians who lost horses through capture by a small party of raiders blamed not only the members of that party but their entire tribe.

Indians didn't just take any horse. These skilled horse raiders knew the quality of the horses of their enemies; in short, they were quite choosy. For instance, the tribes of the Rockies, such as the Crows, possessing both more and better horses than some other tribes were the main targets of Blackfeet and Cheyenne raiding parties.

The horse raid offered young men of poor parents their best chance to be important in their world. Many of the most active raiders were, therefore, poor fellows; young men in their upper teens and early twenties.

The raiding parties usually had from 4 to 12 men. Sometimes parties of 50 or more members were reported, and daring thefts of enemy horses by a lone Indian also occurred. But they were rare.

The night before the raid members of a horse-raiding party would drum on a piece of buffalo rawhide and sing war songs. Other young men of the camp, upon hearing a chant, would join in the singing if they wanted to join the raid. As the singers moved about camp, friends and relatives gave them presents of food and moccasins

for their journey.

Good luck charms were an important part of their raid. Not only the leader, but each raider carried his own sacred war medicine to protect him from harm and bring him luck.

Often a young brave would go to an old man before going on his first raid and ask for some of his power. The receiver of a war medicine would then give the donor one or more horses after a safe return from a good raid.

Or he might make a vow before the other men of his party to feast the owner of some powerful medicine bundle on his return home. Vows to undergo self-torture at the next tribal Sun Dance were also made before entering the enemy camp to take horses. These last minute acts helped to boost the courage of young raiders.

The raiders carried bows and arrows, guns, and knives. The knives, hung at the waist in rawhide sheaths, were sharp and heavy enough to cut firewood and timber for shelters. They served as axes as well as knives, useful in skinning and cutting up animals for food, cutting tied horses from the enemy camp, and to use as weapons for hand-to-hand fighting.

There were both foot and mounted horse raids. It was easier for men to hide themselves from the enemy when afoot than when mounted. However, towards the end of horse raiding, the mounted party gained in popularity, especially in raids directed against the Crow. The mounted party could more easily escape the Army who at that time was seeking to put an end to intertribal horse raiding. While foot war parties averaged about 25 miles a day in good weather, mounted parties traveled more than twice that distance in the same time.

As they neared the enemy country they moved more carefully, traveling at night and hiding out during the daylight hours. A party nearing enemy country halted and built one or more war lodges in a heavily timbered bottom

or on a thickly wooded height.

From the war lodge the leader sent ahead a small number of picked men as scouts to locate the enemy camp. These scouts often wore wolfskins. They watched any sudden movements of game and examined burned-out fires and tracks made by horses, travois, and footmen, and noticed the freshness and direction.

While the scouts were gone, the raiders left at the war lodge hunted for buffalo, deer, elk or other game, killing only enough to give them dried meat for the rest of their journey. They dried the meat and filled their bags. Sometimes they made up more packets of meat for each member. These were small skin or rawhide containers that could be carried at the belt, holding only enough meat for a quick lunch on horseback while rushing homeward with captured horses.

When the scouts located the enemy camp, they watched it from a concealed position long and closely enough to determine its size and numbers of men and horses. Then they returned to the war lodge as quickly as possible.

Guided by the scouts the whole party moved cautiously, traveling only by night and hiding out by day until they reached a well concealed position overlooking the enemy camp. After the leader had a chance to observe the camp, he outlined his plan of attack to his group.

Shortly before the attack the raiders took out their war medicines, sang their sacred war songs, prayed for success, painted and put on their medicine.

Usually the attack was made while it was still quite dark. The leader selected only a few of the bravest and most experienced men to enter the enemy camp with him. They cut loose the picketed horses and led them out. They carried only their knives as they entered the enemy village.

Tied horses were singled out first. When a man led his horses away, he was careful to stay close to the horse he believed to be the fastest so he could jump on it and make a quick getaway should someone in the camp become aware of the theft and rouse the camp.

Sometimes these men left picketed horses with the younger party members outside the camp and returned again for more of the choice animals. At other times, the men outside the camp drove off some of the range herds while the leader and his helpers took the picketed animals.

Page 23 blank

It was a common practice for men who went after the picketed horses to rub cottonwood sap on their bodies and hands. The cottonwood smell would tend to quiet the horses and make them willing to follow the strangers who led them away.

Whether or not the enemy became aware of the actions of the raiding party, a quick getaway was important in order to get a head start. Often a Blackfeet raiding party would take as many as 40 to 60 horses on a single raid. A larger number would be hard to drive homeward at a fast pace over uneven country, through timber and across streams for hundreds of miles. Too many of the horses would have been lost.

For the first two days and nights raiders rode steadily, switching from one mount to another as their horses tired. If a horse played out so that it could not keep up with the rest, it was usually turned loose. If it was a very good horse, the raiders might shoot it to prevent the enemy from retaking it.

At the first resting place after leaving the enemy camp, the horses taken on the raid were distributed among the party. The leader did this. If there were some who had neither captured picketed horses nor run off range stock, those who had claims to horses were then expected to give up some of them to the less lucky.

After pointing out the animals they wished to keep, they called upon members of the party who could claim no horses to divide the remaining animals. Raiders who had taken horses knew that if they were not generous towards those who had taken none, the latter would leave the party and would leave them the job of driving all the horses home, and if he was unfair or stingy in giving horses, warriors would not follow him in the future.

Usually the greatest rewards went to the men who had taken the greatest risks. They received both the most and the best horses. To avoid ill feeling, party members sometimes agreed upon an equal division of the captured

animals. In that case, the leader took first choice and then called upon each man in turn to take one.

If an old woman came to a successful raider and told him she had prayed for him during his absence, he might give her a horse whether or not she was a relative. It was common practice to give horses to relatives, especially to fathers-in-law or brothers-in-law, after a raid. Then the raider would tell his wife to bring to his lodge the old man who had given him war medicine and prayed for his welfare. He fed the old man and gave him one or more of the horses captured on the recent raid.

Generous giving of horses, secured at great risk from enemy camps, was regarded as a noble act. He, who in the flush of success, gave away all the horses he had taken without thought for himself, was remembered for his generosity long after the gifts were forgotten. In fact, it might serve as a help to leadership. It was a custom for a person, who had gotten a captured horse as a gift, to aid the giver in preparing for future raids through presents of moccasins, food, ammunition, or even a gun.

To prevent a captured horse from straying from its new herd, the new owner tied it neck and neck with a gentle mare in his herd. After a week of such treatment, the new horse could be released without fear of straying from his buddy horse. If the stolen horse was the only one owned, he introduced it into the herd of his relatives by the same method. Some men tried to hasten the process by trimming off pieces of the hocks of the two animals necked together, mixing the trimming with dirt and water, and rubbing the strong odored concoction on the noses of both animals. Other owners mixed some manure of the gentle mare with grass and rubbed it on the nose of the new horse.

White Quiver was formerly considered the most successful horse raider among all the Plains Indians, and the Blackfeet achieved a hero's status for his exploits.

When he was a small boy, his father, Trails War Bonnet, was killed by the Crow. White Quiver went on 40 horse stealing expeditions, yet his career as a horse raider ended before he was thirty years of age.

Rather than follow the usual practice of taking horses at night or at daybreak, White Quiver preferred to boldly walk into the enemy camp at dusk, just as the people were settling down for the night. White Quiver's war parties generally were small ones. Old timers could recall only two parties led by him which numbered more than 11 men. One of these raids was against the Sioux, on which 30 raiders killed all the enemy of five lodges and took every horse.

White Quiver's last raid was made at a time when the white army in both Montana and Alberta were trying to put an end to intertribal horse raiding. Leading a party of eight men to the Crow, White Quiver made off with over 50 horses. On the return trip the army from Fort Benton apprehended the party and took the stolen horses from them.

White Quiver restole the horses from the fort and drove them to Canada. There the Mounted Police again took the horses from him. But White Quiver managed to recapture at least a part of the herd and succeeded in bringing them to the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. This was a whirlwind finish to a great raiding career.

It was long after the buffalo was gone that horse raiding ceased. After the Indians passed from a wandering, buffalo-hunting way of life to a life on the reservation and a wage economy, only then did horse raiding gradually give way to other means of achieving status and prestige. Peace came to the Indian. War deeds against enemy tribes, together with the taking of horses, became a thing of the past.

THE INDIAN HORSE RACE
by Raymond Schuessler

Horse racing was a very popular sport among the horse-using tribes of the West. George Catlin, an artist-historian, called it "one of the most exciting amusements, and one of the most costly habits of gambling of the Indians."

Most races were run against societies within the tribe. Men of the same society did not often race each other, even though several men of a society might own fast horses.

Horse racing between tribes, however, often lead to bad feelings and so was avoided. Sometimes when visiting friendly tribes, men took race horses with them and won or lost. But even this could be dangerous.

We know that horse races pitting the best Blackfeet-owned horse against the best racer of a neighboring tribe were not common in buffalo days because of the hostility of the Indian tribes toward their neighbors.

One historian described a match race between a Piegan-owned horse and one belonging to a Kutenia in the summer of 1878. The betting was heavy. The course was a level stretch of about 500 yards. The youthful jockeys, naked except for the breechcloth, raced from a standing start across a finish line marked by a furrow scraped across the dusty course. The horses finished in dead heat and caused a fight; both Piegan and Kutenai claiming they had won.

Hamilton witnessed a race between Crow and Piegan in 1858. Betting was heavy in ponies and robes. The course was about a half mile in length. Horses were held at the head by men on the ground until the starting signal was given. Jockeys were boys "stripped naked." Little Dog, the Piegan chief, and a Crow chief were the judges. The Piegan won the race and the Crow "departed soon

after the race, sullen and silent. All the young Piegans had a great time dancing and singing that night until a late hour."

A winning race horse was the most valuable possession an Indian could own. In trade a fast horse would bring several other good horses. Nearly all racers were male, either stallions or geldings.

Endurance was a quality the Plains Indians asked of their war and hunting horses, so it shouldn't seem strange that they expected the same skill in their race horses. They didn't believe in sprinting races, although a few half-mile races were held in some tribes. Wissler and Pond claimed that some Sioux split the nostrils of the horse clear up to the bone in order to make it long-winded on buffalo hunts and horse races.

Because courses were generally from two to four miles long, horses were not raced until their third or fourth year. Racers were considered in their prime from their fourth to ninth year. After that they would serve as buffalo runners for a number of years.

The best race horse was an animal of small size and common appearance, whom no one would expect to have great speed and endurance. Indians liked to match a horse of this type, whose ability was not very well known, against a large finer appearing animal in the hope of encouraging their rivals to bet heavily and to win large stakes for themselves.

An Indian loved to get a white man into a horse race. There's an old story around Fort Chadbourne, Texas, about a Comanche chief, who used a "miserable sheep of a pony with legs like churns" to beat a beautiful Kentucky mare, winning heavy bets from the soldiers and officers. The victorious Indian rode backwards toward the end of the race making faces at his trailing opponent.

The braves were always on the lookout for a fast horse. In a buffalo hunt, men carefully watched boys, riding year-old colts, chasing buffalo calves. If they saw a colt that seemed to outdistance the others, they examined it carefully. If they thought it had possibilities of becoming a good racer, they trained it until it was ready to race at three or four years.

The potential racer was allowed to run with the range herd much of the time. But it was not used for general riding or packing. There was a strict rule against packing meat or getting blood on a race horse.

A challenge to a horse race began when a member made a round of the camp on horseback, rode up to the lodge of the leader of the rival society, sang his personal war song, lifted his gun and fired at the lodgepoles just above their crossing. Then he shouted his society's challenge to a race horse. The rival society's leader, upon hearing this challenge, rushed out of his lodge, gun in hand, and fired his weapon in the air, shouting his acceptance.

At this meeting between leaders of the two societies, there was a great deal of joking and kidding back and forth before they settled down to the business of talking about plans for the race. Then they decided upon the location

and distance of the course, time of the race, the horses to be run, and the starters and judges.

The course usually was a fairly level stretch of plain near the camp, permitting the running of the race on a straight course. However, there were times when no straight course was close to the camp, in which case the race was run from the starting point around a low distant hill and back to the starting point again. In that case, two judges, one man from each society, were put on top of the hill to see that neither jockey took an unfair advantage of the other while rounding the hill out of sight of the crowd at the start and finish mark. The distance to be run always was measured by eye.

Usually each society held trials some time before the race, in which the fastest horses were run to find the best horse to enter.

The greatest care was taken to stop a horse medicine man from coming near the race horse for fear that he might use his secret power to make one of the horses tire or falter in the stretch.

The Indians were great jockeys and trained and handled their horses with skill. Just as we do today, they chose light, thin, young boys or young men who knew how to handle horses in races. Jockeys usually wore only breechcloths and tied their hair behind their heads to keep it from blowing in their faces. They rode bareback with only a war bridle and a whip to control the horse.

Shortly before the race the two horses were brought to the finish line where the crowd came close to see them and to place bets on their favorites. Betting usually was heavy, by nonmembers as well as members of the rival societies. The horses bet against each other were tied together and held by some lad who had placed no bets. Guns, robes, blankets, and food were common stakes. A man might wager his saddle against another's bow, arrows, and quiver. Even painted lodges, together with all their sacred items were bet on the outcome of the races. (Women, of

course, bet among themselves.)

As the jockeys walked their horses toward the starting point members of the two racing societies drummed, sang their society songs, and engaged in good-natured horse play.

Two leading men served as starters. As the jockeys neared the starting point on their way down the course, they walked their horses in a wide circle, side by side, around the starters. As they came abreast of the latter, facing the finish, the starters gave the signal. There were two judges at the finish, one from each society.

Good sportsmanship was required of the riders. If a loser became angry and claimed that the race had not been honest, men of the winning society knocked him down and rubbed dirt or manure on him.

With the winning horse in the lead, members of the winning society formed a parade back to camp. They walked once around the camp circle to the lodge of that society's leader. There the winning horse was given to the care of an old man, who tied it outside the lodge and sang to it. That night, members of the winning society sang, danced, and rejoiced until a late hour. Not really very much different than the behavior we see around any race track today!

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